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UNCLAS COLOMBO 002048

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SUBJECT: DISASTER DECLARATION - TIDAL WAVE IN MALDIVES

REF: COLOMBO 2046

1. Summary: Based on an official request from the Chief Government Spokesman of the Republic of Maldives and our assessment of the situation, the Ambassador declares that a state of disaster has resulted from the tidal wave that hit Maldives on December 26 (reftel). The Ambassador requests USD 100,000 under the Ambassador's disaster assistance authority to respond to the humanitarian needs created by this disaster. End summary.

2. A tidal wave hit Maldives mid-morning on December 26, leaving an unknown number of dead, injured and homeless. Chief Government Spokesman Dr. Ahmed Shaheed told emboff that two-thirds of the capital city of Male is under water, that not a single structure has been left standing on some other islands, and that communications have been completely lost with some of the remoter atolls. Shaheed confirmed that at least eight people had been reported killed so far, but cautioned that casualty figures are expected to rise as more information becomes available. On behalf of his government, Shaheed formally requested U.S. disaster assistance.

3. The Ambassador has been in contact with OFDA Regional Advisor Bill Berger by telephone to discuss the situation. Based on the magnitude of the disaster, Post requests USD 100,000 be made available for disaster relief. Specific targeting of these resources will be determined in consultation with OFDA based on further assessment of need.

4. Based on the evidence above, I declare a disaster resulting from the tidal wave in Maldives. The disaster is well beyond the capacity of the Maldivian government to respond adequately, and provision of this humanitarian assistance is in the interest of the U.S. government.

5. Action for OFDA: Embassy requests OFDA provide immediate fund cite of USD 100,000.  
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